

February 2021

Uniter



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SILVER SPRING
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WORSHIP SERVICES

**Music begins at 10:30 AM / Service at 11:00 AM
Zoom Coffee Hour at 12:00 PM**

How to Join Worship

- A. Join the Livestream by visiting the church's [YouTube](#) page
- B. Join the sign language interpretation on Zoom (link in weekly all church emails)
- C. Attend virtual coffee hour on Zoom (link in weekly all church emails)

Having trouble tuning in for worship?

Please email administrator@uucss.org
with your name and phone number to be connected with a volunteer who can help.

February 7: Being Together While We're Apart, Annual YRUU Service

Even though we are physically apart during this pandemic, we still have relationships that keep us together. Our congregation's YRUU group will reflect on these relationships through music, meditations, stories, and a special message during this annual youth-led service.

February 14: Deeply Understood, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt and the Lay Ministry Committee

One of the things that leads many people to claim a spiritual home as their own is feeling deeply heard, seen, or understood by that community. This week in worship we will hear from our Lay Ministers about the ministry of deep listening that they offer to our congregation, how this service has deepened their spiritual journeys, and how all of us can minister to one another by offering a listening presence.

February 21: Powering Up, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

We are so richly blessed by the gifts, passions, commitments, and support of every single person who calls this congregation their own. This week in worship we will kick off our Annual Budget Drive and power up for all of the good ministry we're being called to do right here, right now!

February 28: TBA

INSPIRE

Minister's Column by Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt



To understand how we have arrived at this moment in this nation's history, we must turn our focus from political parties and particular leaders to the different ideas about what makes this country a community. This country has always approached freedom with a mindset of scarcity, and now hundreds of years later that sense of scarcity motivated a movement willing to disenfranchise millions of people in an effort to strengthen their sense of superiority. For this movement, white supremacy and Christian nationalism define the community which is formed like a pyramid, and it is intolerable for anyone other than them to be at the top.

But there have grown other movements dedicated to other goals, and among them is our liberal faith movement. Our movement understands that while freedom is most precious, it is not a thing to be hoarded but something that gets stronger as it is shared. For us, freedom and a mutual sense of curiosity and appreciation define the community which we strive to form in the shape of a circle, and it is intolerable for anyone whose behavior is within our covenant to be left out. As bell hooks writes, "Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world."

As we continue to try to make meaning of how we've arrived where we are, and as we honor Black History Month, it will be good to delve deeply together into the theme of "beloved community." Because the work to build a community that provides for the needs of all continues--no matter who is president or what party is in power.

Message From Carl Miller, Board President



It's been such a pleasure to hear about people I know--including those in our church community--receiving COVID-19 vaccines. The first person I learned about was a doctor friend up in Michigan who got the vaccine in December. I've lost count now of how many there have been in my circle. There's a break in the clouds! I hope.

I will share with you two agenda items from UUCSS board meetings. One is that we've formed a Minister Evaluation Committee (thanks to Stephanie McConachie and Bonnie Gallion). This group--which is separate from, but related to, the Committee on Shared Ministry--is about starting an annual cycle of communication between the church and our new settled minister, Rev. Kristin. The process will be broadly focused--intending to catch input from as many congregants as we can--and we will reflect on how to optimize the sharing of our gifts within this community. Information will be sent out later about small-group meetings that will be part of the effort.

The other board agenda item is that--although we are still a long way from any physical reopening at UUCSS--we are going to have a discussion at the January meeting about reopening criteria. We will consider questions such as: what would infection rates and vaccine rates have to be before we'd consider reopening? What would church services look like during a transition period? Early exploration of these issues, we hope, will make it easier to be careful and decisive when the time comes to open the church's doors again.

These days, I am looking for optimism whenever it can be found. On January 12, six days after the U.S. Capitol riot, I went to an online meeting called the "Hold America Together National Gathering." The meeting, which was intended to be politically nonpartisan, started with some speakers reflecting on the pain of watching the U.S. electoral process devolve in violence. They then had a series of public dialogues between people of different political orientations. (The dialogues were not so much about political issues per se, but about the nature of political identity and thoughts on the times that we're living in.)

I've been to a few events of this type. I think of them as starting points only, and I don't have any expectation that they are going to prevent political violence in the short term. But they helped me to appreciate something ironic, and possibly hopeful: right now, the mere act of talking and listening is countercultural.

What gives you hope and optimism right now? You're invited to share by commenting on the #ShareWithUs post found in the UUCSS private Facebook group.

LEARN

Religious Education Activities--for Children and Adults

Youth Religious Education

At UUCSS, we offer religious education for all ages. If you are not yet registered, you can do so for the following ages on our website at <https://uucss.org/children/>

- Pre-School (Ages 2-5) Parents of Preschoolers (POP!)
- Kindergarten through 1st Grade - "Love Surrounds Us" from Tapestry of Faith
- Grades 2 through 4 - "Love Will Guide Us" from Tapestry of Faith
- Grades 5 through 6 (Middle School A) - "Heeding the Call: Qualities of a Justice Maker" from Tapestry of Faith
- Grades 7 through 8 (Middle School B) - "Building Bridges: A World Religions Program" from Tapestry of Faith
- Grade 9 - Coming of Age (COA)
- Grades 10 through 12 - Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU)

Soul Matters Monthly Conversation: Beloved Community, Led by Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Sunday, February 7, 1 - 2:30 pm

Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes "the person who loves their dream of community will destroy community, but the person who loves those around them will create community." This month we delve into the theme of "beloved community" and how we build and nurture it as a congregation. Everyone is invited to join in this conversation that follows a small group ministry approach. No need to register or sign up, you are welcome whether you can make it to all or just one of these monthly conversations. Links to each Zoom conversation will be available in the all-church emails.

Reading, Resilience, and Resistance, Led by Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Tuesday, February 2, 7:30 - 9 pm and Sunday, February 21, 1 - 2:30 pm

This month we will sink into the wisdom of leading anti-racist scholar Ibram X. Kendi and TRUUst members Alex Kapitan and Rev. Mykal Slack. In this class, we use a sacred reading approach to engage deeply with a text and explore what meaning it holds for us today. In these days when so much injustice is being laid bare, join us as we seek wisdom and inspiration from people who have persisted and found joy even while living through tumult and oppression. No need to register or sign up, you are welcome whether you can make it to all or just one of these monthly conversations. Links to each class will be available in the all-church emails.



CONNECT



EVENTS

Recurring and committee events can also be found on the Church Calendar at: <https://uucss.org/calendar/>

Feb. 1, 7:30 - 10:00 pm. Online Men's Group

Feb. 2, 7:30 - 9:30 pm. Reading, Resilience, and Resistance, with Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt. Link to the Zoom conversation will be available in the all-church emails.

Feb. 3, 7 - 8:30 pm. 8th Principle Linguistic Pop-Up Sessions, with Miako Villanueva. Share stories about what the 8th Principle means to us. Rather than trying to pin-down words, this event looks intensely at the deeper connections they hold. This can help us lean into being inclusive and encompassing as we understand how words resonate within ourselves and each other. Sign up required on the [Google form](#). Limited to 10 spaces.

Feb. 3, 7 - 8 pm. Antiracism Parent Group [Zoom link](#)

Feb. 4, 7:30 pm. Masterworks of Music--Rap & Hip-hop: It's significance and influence on later music (w/ Charles Alexander). [Zoom link](#) Meeting ID: 965 2955 7241 Passcode: 725889

Feb. 7, 1 - 2:30 pm. Soul Matters Small Group Conversation, with Rev. Kristin Grassel-Schmidt. Links to the Zoom conversation will be available in the all-church emails.

Feb. 8, 7:30 - 10:00 pm. Online Men's Group

Feb.10, 7 - 8 pm. Antiracism Parent Group [Zoom link](#)

Feb. 11, 7:30 pm. Masterworks of Music--Early New Orleans Jazz: Celebrating Mardi Gras (w/ Deborah Thornton). [Zoom link](#) Meeting ID: 965 2955 7241 Passcode: 725889

Feb. 15, 7:30 - 10:00 pm. Online Men's Group

Feb. 17, 7 - 8 pm. Antiracism Parent Group [Zoom link](#)

Feb. 18, 7:30 pm. Masterworks of Music--Minimalism: John Adams--Harmonium (Poetry by Emily Dickinson). [Zoom link](#) Meeting ID: 965 2955 7241 Passcode: 725889

Feb. 21, 1 - 2:30 pm. Reading, Resilience, and Resistance, with Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt. Link to the Zoom conversation will be available in the all-church emails.

EVENTS CONTINUED...

Feb. 21, 7 pm. Men's Book Group--We are reading two plays by August Wilson, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and *Fences*, and comparing them to the movies. The 2016 movie *Fences* is available on Amazon Prime and 2020's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* is on Netflix. If reading and watching both is too much, just choose one. If you are interested in joining the group, contact Richard Lorr (rlorr4@gmail.com) to get the Zoom link and come to the next meeting!

Feb. 22, 7:30 - 9:30 pm. Women's Book Group--*American Dirt: A Novel* by Jeanine Cummins. This 2020 novel is about the ordeal of a Mexican woman who had to leave behind her life and escape as an undocumented immigrant to the United States with her son. Please contact Deb Weiner (dweiner04@gmail.com) to be added to the next Zoom discussion. A long-term obligation is not required to join our discussions.

Feb. 22, 7:30 - 10:00 pm. Online Men's Group

Feb. 24, 7 - 8 pm. Antiracism Parent Group [Zoom link](#)

Feb. 25, 7:30 pm. Masterworks of Music--Mozart: Symphony No. 40. [Zoom link](#) Meeting ID: 965 2955 7241
Passcode: 725889

Committee Updates

Racial Justice Task Force (RJTF)

Building Beloved Community

By Phyllis Ryder

I feel in my body dual responses to the terrorist attack on Congress: "This is not America." "This is America." Jake and I listened in on a "Movement for Black Lives" call the evening of the insurrection, where Ash Lee Henderson remarked, "If you're feeling the contradictions, you are not losing it. This is happening."

I want to believe that a frenzied crowd, flowing like white lava into sacred halls of our democracy is an anomaly. Yet I know it is not, that our country was built on this contradiction between our ideals and our practices, tolerating democracy only to the extent that democracy tolerates white supremacy. Any weakening of that alliance is met with violence.

The events ten miles south of our Congregation seem so far away and so close. I can distance myself: I did not wrap myself in flags of lies and hatred; no one I know breached those sacred walls. And yet, I know people who believe what the terrorists believe. And I know that on a smaller scale, through unconscious daily actions, I continue to behave in ways that maintain the dominant social order. Like many in the congregation, I have committed to the hard, hard work of engaging with my relatives and friends, reflecting on my own beliefs and behaviors, and taking action with others to build the America I want to live in.

We do not need to do this work alone. Nor are we in new territory: Black leaders have been showing us the way forward all along. I turn to James Baldwin, Dr. King, Malcolm X; I turn to Ibram Kendi, Isabel Wilkerson, Austin Channing Brown; I turn to the queer women who formed Black Lives Matter - Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi. I hold carefully the balance between learning and acting, knowing I will never be done learning and that, no matter how incomplete my understanding, I must act to change the world. I am grateful to be doing this work with all of you.

COMMITTEE UPDATES CONTINUED...

Some tools from the Racial Justice Task Force:

For white people who want to engage white friends and family who support Trump: In 2018, David Camp led [White Ally Toolkit](#) Workshop with our Congregation. See the website for excellent resources.

Antiracism Parent Group. Every Wednesday 7 pm - 8 pm , Marsha Thrall leads a parent group. [Zoom link](#)

Coming soon: another book group discussion of Caste; a workshop to explore the UUA's [Widening the Circle of Concern](#) report, which provides a detailed review of how to address white supremacy within the UUA.

Bookmark this page: We will post all upcoming events & actions at: <https://tinyurl.com/UUCSS-RJTF>.

Take Action for Police Accountability

Maryland's 2021 Legislative Session began on January 13. Please write to your state lawmakers to urge real change in MD policing. These bills are supported by the ACLU and Maryland Coalition for Justice and Police Accountability because they are the most comprehensive, going far enough to make real reform possible.

Please ask your MD legislators to support these bills.

HB139: Law Enforcement Offices - Use of Force--The legal standard for use of force in MD is too low and puts Maryland residents at risk of unnecessary or excessive use of force. HB 139 seeks to address this issue and implement a statewide use of force law. For background, contacts and sample email: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tu-YtnxclupTUPKH7Gdp-8IU8bYIjseX/edit>

HB151: Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights--Repeals the LEOBR, the state law that governs the disciplinary process for Maryland police officers. LEOBR grants police officers special rights no other state employee has. Police abuse can only be investigated by sworn law enforcement and investigations conducted by civilians cannot result in discipline. For sample email and contacts: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VZqoEVF5OVH1fPBjRT-apD6UiGQTXCWyBtcVGqXXSr0/edit>

HB120/SB178: Public Information Act--Personnel Records--Investigations of Law Enforcement Officers (Anton's Law). Maryland ranks among the least transparent states with regard to police misconduct complaints. Under Maryland's current Public Information Act, personnel records may never be disclosed. This means when a complaint of police misconduct is filed, you can not find out how the department investigates the complaint. These bills will allow increased public access to information. For sample email and contacts: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ihnkZIDGp-kdKiVqPB7Arc2sei4oe1VwpURVOMKode8/edit>

More information about how to take action is available here: <http://bit.ly/MD-ACLU>. Please contact External-RJTF@uucss.org with any questions.

COMMITTEE UPDATES CONTINUED...

Green Sanctuary

Write Your MD Representatives for Action on Climate Change

Your Green Sanctuary Committee urges you to write your Delegates and/or Senators soon about one or all of the four climate-related bills below that are coming up in the 2021 legislative session. For each of these bills, we have briefly listed what the new legislation will do, when the bills come up for committee hearings (if known), and who to contact from Districts 13 through 23A--those near UUCSS in Montgomery, Prince George, and part of Howard counties--to get the bills passed. (If you live in a state district outside of these numbers, please see mdelect.net to look up your representatives.)

In the "Take Action" section below is information for writing a letter or an email to your representative(s).

1. Climate Solutions Now Act

Why we need this: Climate science says that greenhouse gasses are the main cause of climate change and urgent reduction is needed to avert disastrous consequences.

What it will do

- Increases Maryland's Greenhouse Gas Reduction mandate to net neutral by 2045, in line with recommendations of The Maryland Commission on Climate Change with an interim 60% reduction by 2030. (Current mandates are 40% by 2030 and 80% by 2050)
- Requires that a percentage of all state funds invested in climate must be spent in overburdened communities. (If the New York Climate and Community Investment Act, which is considered the best state standard, is used as a model, the percentage would be 40%.)
- Develops recommendations by a stakeholder work group to protect displaced fossil fuel workers through workforce development and training programs

SB0926/HB1425 Sponsors: Delegate Dana Stein (11)/Senator Paul Pinsky (22)

Senate Committee--Education, Health and Environment (Pinsky, Chair, and Cheryl Kegan, Vice-Chair, (17))

2. Community Choice Energy

Why we need this: This bill can have a huge impact on greenhouse gas emissions by switching whole areas en masse to renewable electricity sources.

What it will do

- Allows municipal entities (counties, townships, etc) to negotiate with energy providers for lower rates and a greater percentage of energy from renewable sources for their locality
- The selected provider would become the default energy supplier for the locality instead of the current default which is the rate and fuel mix of the local utility. Note that individuals can opt out if they so choose
- Will start as a pilot in Montgomery County

HB 561/SB 315 Sponsors: Delegate Lorig Charkoudian (20)/Senator Pam Beidle (32)

House Committee--Economic Matters (Davis, Chair (25), Dumais, Vice-Chair (15), Charkoudian (20) Fennell (47A), Qi (15), Queen (14), Turner, Valderrama, and Walker (all 26))

3. Transit Safety and Investment Act

Why we need this: Transportation is the top contributor to climate pollution in Maryland; robust public transit systems reduce traffic congestion, greenhouse gas emissions, and air pollution by reducing vehicle trips. People with low incomes need reliable public transit. Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) is facing a \$2 billion budget shortfall for the next decade.

What it will do

- Provide an average annual increase of \$100 million for MTA capital needs for the next six years, maintain MARC safety systems, bus shelters, buses, light rail and subway tracks, MARC switches
- Improve access to MARC and bus stations, expand bus shelters

- Promote sustainability efforts such as including EV charging at Baltimore metro and MARC stations and add rooftop solar at bus depots

HB0368/SB0424 Sponsors: Delegate Brooke Lierman (46)/Senator Cory McCray (45)
House Committee--Appropriations (Marc Corman, (16); Jared Solomon (18), Ben Barnes (21), and Geraldine Valentino-Smith (23A)).

Senate Committee--Budget and Taxation (Guy Guzzone, Chair (13); James Rosapepe, Vice-Chair, (21); Douglas Peters (23); Craig Zuker (14)).

4. **Public-Private Partnerships (P3) - Process and Oversight**

Why we need this: The 11 billion dollar P3 plan to widen the Beltway and parts of Route 270 will provide only short-term relief for congestion while increasing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution and very likely creating high-cost tolls, taxpayer risk and increased water bills (because the costs of moving water lines will be passed on to consumers). Adding one mile of new highway lane is estimated to increase carbon dioxide emissions by more than 10,000 tons over 5 years.

What it will do

- Toughen P3 oversight and reviews
- Add special requirements, such as independent fiscal analyses, for transportation P3s exceeding \$500 million
- Give the General Assembly up to a year to review initial P3 designations as a safeguard

No bill number yet. Sponsor: Del Solomon (18).

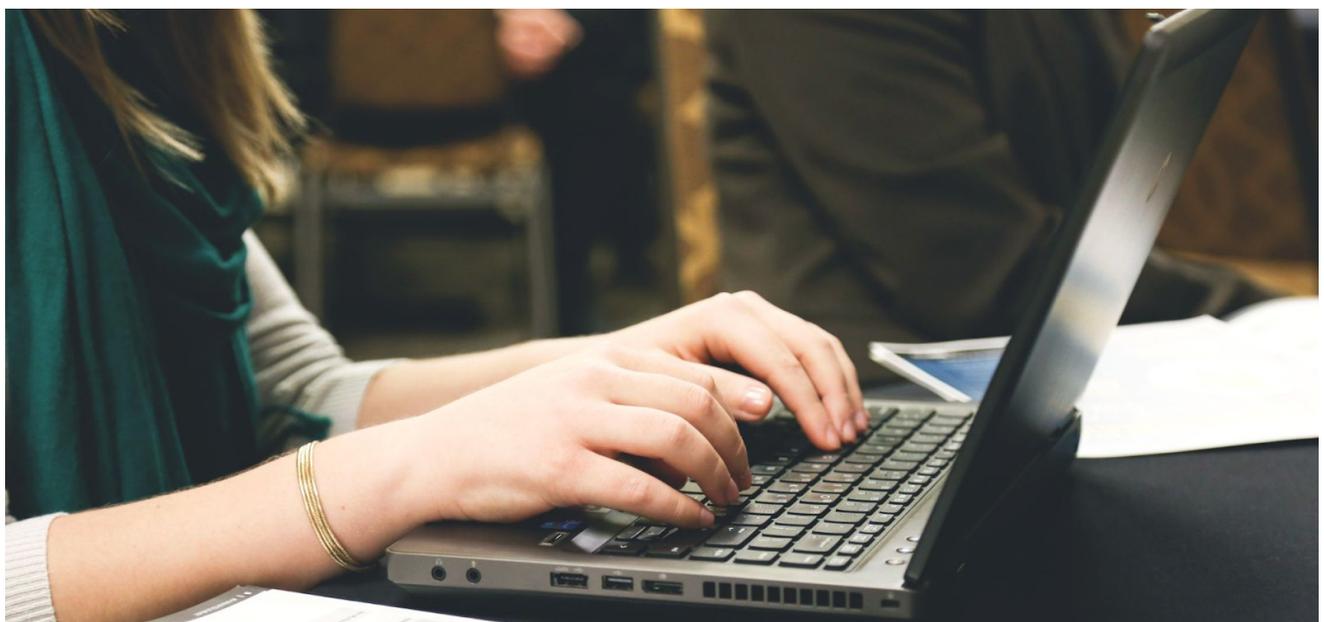
For more info on this emerging bill, see the website dontwiden270.org and go to Media Archives.

! TAKE ACTION:

If your delegates or senator are:

- Sponsors named above--write to thank them and urge them to continue to fight for the bill
- On the committee named above--write to ask them to support the bill and move it out of committee
- Not mentioned above--write to ask them to support the bill

Not sure who your delegates or senator are? Go to mdelect.net to look them up. The site has links to their email--very easy!



COMMITTEE UPDATES CONTINUED...

Leadership Retreat--What We Learned

By Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Each year the Board and Program Council of this congregation participate in a leadership retreat. With a bow to the limits of Zoom, this year the retreat was more focused in terms of both time and scope, and everyone in the congregation was invited to take part. The workshop on Friday evening was called “Imagining Together: Church After the Pandemic” and was co-led by Michael Holmes, music director, and me. The workshop on Saturday afternoon was called “Becoming Conscious of Our Congregational Expectations,” and it was led by Rev. Megan Foley who is a member of UUA staff. About 40 people participated in each workshop, and it was gratifying to hear one participant remark that it was “the best leadership retreat ever.”

While most visioning workshops focus on medium to long-term hopes and dreams, on Friday night we acknowledged that we are in a unique moment in history and that the current and emerging needs of our communities are calling us to action. Frederick Buechner wrote that we are called to the place “where our deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” This quote gave shape to our task to discern what we as a congregation are being called to do, here and now. Participants identified music, multigenerational worship, our Deaf Access Ministry, work for justice, and the joy we feel being together as the sources of our “deep gladness” as a congregation. The list describing the “deep hungers” in our communities was much longer, but included hunger and housing, the need for connection during this pandemic, fear and uncertainty, support for parents and families, protecting democracy, and work for justice (racial, environmental, etc.). The conversation exploring where our joy and the world’s needs meet was dynamic, and centered on our congregation’s relationships with others:

- We can help alleviate hunger through our ongoing work with organizations like Shepherd’s Table.
- We can help protect democracy and advocate for better supports for parents and families through our work with other UU congregations in the UU Legislative Ministry of Maryland.
- We can serve the need for connection by improving deaf access in everything we do and by gearing up to continue offering worship and other activities online even as the need for social distancing fades.

At the second workshop, we took a look at what tasks the new Communications Administrator will perform, which will be covered by other staff or volunteers, and which tasks we aren’t sure are getting done. We reviewed how to nurture a healthy and satisfying working environment for staff by right-sizing our expectations, especially during this pandemic, and I explained that I will need to limit my attendance at some meetings in order to maintain a sustainable schedule. Then we reviewed the many tasks involved in making virtual worship happen. Take-aways included:

- It’s normal for a church’s dreams and sense of call to be bigger than what its staff and volunteers can sustain.
- It’s up to each staff person to set and maintain their own boundaries as best they can, and it is the responsibility of leaders and members to honor those boundaries as best they can.
- Our congregation is richly blessed with passion, commitment, and financial support. If we wish to see different outcomes in terms of what we accomplish together, we will need to make different choices about where we invest our many resources (time, energy, focus, money, etc.).

Volunteer Spotlight

Laura Ellis



Laura Ellis came to UnitarianUniversalism just out of law school in what then was probably the only UU fellowship in the Adirondacks. She liked the Christmas service and responded strongly to our Principles. On moving to the DC area in the late 1990s, she began looking for a UU church community. UUCSS was the third and last church she visited. UUCSS felt like home.

Laura became involved immediately, joining the choir, which opened many friendships. In 1999, she began the church rummage sale tradition and managed it for many years thereafter. Laura also volunteered for RE and, in 2001, she found her RE niche when she became a YRUU advisor. In the same year, she was also chair of the UUCSS Social Action Committee. For many years, she was on the Children and Youth RE committee, and after a hiatus again became a YRUU advisor. She was also a board member and worked extensively on planning for our facility.

As a single, childless adult, UUCSS has offered a way for Laura to interact with children and youth in a close and meaningful way. As good as online church has been, she also misses our face-to-face interactions and hopes that we can all be together soon in person. UUCSS is her home and we are glad to have her.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

Contacting Rev. Kristin

If you'd like to chat or have a pastoral visit, please go to www.calendly.com/rev-kristin-schmidt where you can schedule an appointment.

Office hours: Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, 8am-2pm. Emails are checked.

Day off: Monday

Writing day: Wednesday

Contact number for phone and text: 202-780-7164

Email: minister@uucss.org

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FIRST CLASS

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Submissions are due by the 17th of the prior month.
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Send information and visuals to uniter@uucss.org.

Format guidelines for submissions: Text must be in a form that it can
be edited, either in a Google Doc (preferred), Word file, or in the body
of an email that can be copied and pasted. Graphics must be in a
format in which they can be repositioned and resized—jpeg is greatly
preferred.

Co-editors are **Lynn Cave** and **Becca Stucky**.

To receive a PDF email version of the newsletter, contact the church
office at administrator@uucss.org.

To receive a mailed copy of the **Uniter** for the year, please send **\$24**
to UUCSS, Attention: Collector.